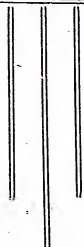


HEART OF THE RG-VEDA



D. V. MURTHI

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FOREWORD

I am very happy to record that my friend Sri D. V. Murthi has brought out this nice booklet after a careful study of the import of the vedic literature. It is indeed regrettable that many persons study the Aranyakas and the Upanishads while the Mantra and the Brahmana parts are deemed to be unimportant. While the great Acharyas of India have commented upon the Upanishads and interpreted them to suit their preconceived philosophical theory, they have not thought it worth while to give clear expositions of the other parts of the Vedas. Acharya Purna Prajna was the first to emphasise that all vedic texts are capable of three interpretations from *Adhidaivika*, *Adhyathmika* and *Adhibhoutika* angles. He chose forty mantras for *Adhidaivika* interpretation and produced a booklet, *Rg-Bhashya*. This treatise, has been much admired by the mystic sage of modern times, Sri Arabindo.

By a wise selection of verses from the Rg. Veda Sri Murthi has provided translation in English which gives a glimpse of a dedicated life in the time of the dawn of civilisation and which also provides us with guidelines for us even today, to live a long, healthy and happy life. I recommend that this booklet should not only be read but re-read a number of times till the vedic injunctions are mastered.

“ ತೇಜಸ್ವಿ ನಾವಧೀತಮಸ್ತು, ಮಾ ವಿದ್ವಿಷಾವಹ್ಯೇ ! ”

(Let what we study become lustrous, let us not hate each other !)

N. K. Narasimha Murthy

Rtd. Principal

Bangalore
30-8-1978

21/122, D. V. Gundappa Road,
Basavanagudi, Bangalore-560 004.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

It is true that Upanishads have rightly attracted wide attention, while the Vedas which are admittedly their sources have been treated more or less as sealed books—as some of the Rks. (hymns) are difficult for interpretation. There is difference of opinion between the orthodox scholars and the modern orientalists, in the interpretation of the hymns. Any way, I feel that there is as much philosophy in the Vedas as there is in the Upanishads. The popular view that the Vedas sing only the praises of a plurality of Gods (Devas) and are made up of hymns to be addressed to them at numerous sacrifices, is far from correct judgment. There is a higher aim, i.e. to convey to the masses the true knowledge of the one Supreme Being with infinite number of infinite qualities.

The vedic hymns have to be interpreted from three points of view, i. e. ಅಧಿಭೌತಿಕ, ಅಧ್ಯಾತ್ಮಿಕ and ಅಧಿದೈವಿಕ; this scheme of triple interpretation of the Veda is found in Shri Madhvacharya's Rg. Bhashya; and handsome tributes are paid for this new lead, in the new edition of the Rg. Veda Samhita—published by the Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

It is well known that Sri Aurobindo has adapted the *arsha* tradition for the vedic interpretations which are rational in character.

My booklet gives a preliminary lesson to the students who are interested in the study of the Vedas—to lead a good, healthy and happy life and to have sufficient spiritual revelation.

I have, in the introduction, attempted to give briefly the life, religion and culture, of the Indian people in the Vedic period. In the succeeding chapters representing several spiritual attitudes in the manner of the Bhagavad Gita, I have selected and grouped a few hymns (translated into English) under different topics—with my notes, wherever necessary, to indicate the spiritual and religious significance of each hymn.

I record my great obligations to the vedic scholars whose works I have frequently consulted and accepted as my guide in writing this booklet.

And, I am highly grateful to my learned friend, Sri Narasimha Murthy, Retired Professor of Mathematics, Mysore University and Retired Principal, for his valuable suggestions and for his writing a thought-provoking foreword.

“ ಶಂ ಸರಸ್ವತಿ ಸಹ ಧೀಭಿರಸ್ತು ”

(Rg. VIII 35-11)

“May Saraswathi, as the inspirer of thought and knowledge, be gracious with her intellectual powers”.

Bangalore
15-9-78

D. V. Murthi
(Rtd. Engineer)

CONTENTS

	<i>Pages</i>
1. Introduction	4
2. Chapter I—Path of Knowledge	8
3. Chapter II—Path of Mysticism	10
4. Chapter III—Path of Splendour	17
5. Chapter IV—Path of Devotion	21
6. Chapter V—Path of Action	26
7. References	36
8. Abbreviations	36

INTRODUCTION

1. Vedas

The word Veda is derived from the root विद्- to know. The Vedas are very old—perhaps as old as 4000 years. They are also called Srutis—from the root श्रु- to hear. The Veda samhitas (collection of hymns) in the form of poetry, were heard first (from the Divine Voice) by the great rishis who were very wise, pure (both in body and mind) and highly disciplined. The Vedic hymns (mantras) are regarded as revealed Eternal Truths; they are preserved and handed down from oral tradition (from teacher to pupil)—a feat unequalled in the history of the human race. They are said to be “Apourusheya”—as they are not composed by any man. The religion and culture of the Hindus are rooted in the texts of the Vedas; the Vedic age is generally called “Satya Yuga” or “Age of Truth”. The visions of beauty of life and nature in the Vedas, are extremely rich in poetic value.

2. Divisions

The Veda mantras are grouped into four divisions, viz :

- (1) The Rg-Veda - adopted primarily for recital.
- (2) The Yajur Veda - mostly employed in religious sacrifices.
- (3) The Sama Veda - for chanting in Soma sacrifices.
- (4) The Atharva Veda - mostly dealt with magical and sacramental rites.

Each Veda comprises of four parts : viz :

- (a) Mantras-Hymns for recital, in prayer, worship and sacrifice.
- (b) Brahmanas—Ritual treatises for Grihasthas, in conservation of forms and visions.
- (c) Aranyakas—Forest treatises for Vanaprasthas, in living a forest life.
- (d) Upanishads—Philosophic treatises for Sanyasins in their search after Truth.

The Rg-Veda consists of 10,552 mantras :

The Yajur Veda consists of 1975 (some being in prose).

The Sama Veda consists of 1875.

The Atharva Veda consists of 5987 (a few being in prose). In all, the Vedic Samhitas consist of 20,389 mantras ; they, however, include repetitions. especially of a number of Rg.Vedic Verses - in the Vedas.

3. Rg-Veda

It is the oldest and the largest of the four Vedas. It forms, as it were, the source of all the Vedic literature or Hindu Scriptures, and it stands as an authority. The Verses are compact and cryptic. Sri Yaska's Nirukta and Sri Sayana's Bhashya form the basis for all commentaries on Rg.Veda - as they explain to a certain extent the meanings of the Vedic terms, both grammatically and etymologically. The Vedic scholars of the West (Europe) have admired especially the rationality of Sri Sayana's interpretation. They formed a monumental

work for centuries. Later on, Professor Max Muller with a missionary spirit and with the help of the East India Company and the Maharaja of Vijayanagar, dedicated his life—in translating the vedic mantras from Sanskrit to English and got them printed in a book-form with necessary notes. Even today they stand as Books of Eternity in the libraries under the title “Sacred Books of the East”.

4. Vedic Life

The Vedic sages are positive in their acceptance of life and death and life's struggles & limitations; they are positive, too in their acceptance of ultimate values of truth, goodness, beauty, Eternal law (Dharma) and the Ultimate Reality. They are intensely religions in the sense of feeling the living presence of the Divine in the beauty and glory of the creation (living and non-living) of the Universe. The sages, including some women, placed themselves under strict discipline of Satya and Dharma as well as Tapas. They were very pure in their mental make-up and dedicated their lives to a pure way of living leading to the spiritual revelation. It is remarkable that their romantic enthusiasm for life was kept under control by a classic sense of proportion and a realistic sense of possibility.

5. Vedic Language

The Vedic language is in sanskrit—marked by extreme economy of expression ; and it is often compact to the extent of being cryptic. The words of the Vedas have resounded through many ages and we should expect

them to be resounding for many more—as they are the universal truths, applicable for all times. The visions of the beauty of life and nature in the Vedas are extremely rich in poetic value. The Vedic words were the seeds of thought and vision by which the rishis discovered the old truths, in new forms.

6. Vedic Religion

The hymns of the Rg-Veda are the earliest prayers of man—for the worship of the great powers of nature like fire, water, air, celestial splendour etc., personified as Agni, Varuna, Vayu, Indra etc., Vedic Gods (Deities) are classified as Gods of the sky, of mid-region and of earth. In all, there are 33 deities. Although some of the hymns express moral ideals and spiritual aspirations with high religious fervour it is found that the general trend of the songs of the vedic priests, is purely earthly and materialistic. These hymns are, of course, in the praise of different Gods and Goddesses (Deities) personifying the natural powers. The Vedic religion is a way of life of simplicity and straight-forwardness. It looks as if it is an honest transaction between the deities and man. The idea of one Supreme Reality—as the Eternal and Absolute Being is peculiar to the vedic religion and philosophy. The Divinity is contemplated as “One in Many and Many in one”. The vedic theism is the worship of one divinity in many names and forms. It takes its stand on a mystical experience in which One is real and the Many, too, are real; and the Many find their unity in One. This is in accordance with the principle of “Unity in

Diversity". And it covers all human relations. The vedic Aryans accepted all the different deities that were worshipped, but synthesised them as manifestations of One Divinity. For instance, the first hymn in the Rg-Veda is "ಅಗ್ನಿ ಮೀಲೇ ಪುರೋಹಿತಂ". Here, in the outward sacrifice, fire is the first to be worshipped, the supreme Being immanent in fire is next lauded under the same name and epithets applied to Fire-God (ಅಗ್ನಿ); and in the inward sacrifice of jnana (ಅತ್ಮಜ್ಞಾನ) the Supreme is praised as the author of all sacrifice. Similarly with the different deities, sacrifices are conducted, converging all to the Supreme Being. The adage "Veda for the priest and Vedanta for the sage" is to be properly interpreted as "Veda for all".

7. Vedic Realism

The realistic ideal of life is that of a perfect body, a sound mind and an unconquerable soul, It is insisted that one should live the full period of life (which the Veda puts at 100 years and more), and live joyfully. The realistic joy of life is evident in the attitude of worship which should not be gloomy. Worship, like song and poetry, is an overflow of the joy of the soul.

Another aspect of vedic realism is that man is not considered to be a mean and sinful creature; on the other hand, he is conscious of a divinity within himself and is considered to be an Amsa of God and an instrument of action—which is long established in the mother's womb.

8. Vedic Socialism

Vedic Society is chiefly based on the collectivistic ideal of life. First, there is the ideal of conjugal union; the notable features being (1) monogamous ideal, (2) equality of status of woman with husband, (3) mutual love, (4) becoming parents of children, (5) Chastity of both—considered as divine. Next comes the ideal citizenship and participation of all in the social functions. Lastly, the duties of a citizen towards his fellowmen are obligatory.

9. Vedic Universalism

All the prayers to deities are addressed to the welfare of the humanity at large. It is repeatedly asserted that the deity worshipped is common to all. The sages and seers preached Veda and Vedic religion to all, at home and abroad. They gave no name to their religion, for they did not preach a set form or creed but a spiritual and moral ideal, a culture and a character pattern of which they themselves were the model. So, they came, to share their spiritual discovery and their moral discipline with vast masses of people. It is no wonder that the veda calls them "World Builders" (ಭೂತಕೃತಃ). They built so strongly that their spiritual edifice has stood so firmly for thousands of years.

India (Bharat) has followed the vedic religion for not less than 3500 years; and very great success has been achieved. Men remarkable for their spiritual power, wisdom and universality of outlook have been thrown open from different parts of the country. Masses of

Hindus even today show certain essential traits behaviour and stand a contrast to similar classes of people, at home and abroad :

It is seen and experienced that since the vedic age Hinduism, well founded by the sages and seers on vedic principles has flourished with a strange vitality withstanding very severe onslaughts from Buddhists, Muslims and Christians. The truth of the whole matter lies in the imperishable eternal truths and unconquerable spirit contained in the Vedas and the noble lives, lived according to high moral and spiritual ideals embodied in them. The Vedas and especially Rg Veda, do not contemplate movement without a purpose, a mere form of life without a content. They conceive of a movement on the path of Truth, Dharma, self-dedication for a noble cause, of prayer, wisdom and service—with the spirit of self-sacrifice.

In the words of Dr. Radhakumud Mukerji, a new voice is heard :—"The first point of distinction is that the Vedas, and especially Rg Veda represent not merely the dawn of culture but also its zenith. The Indian thought is seen at its height in the Rg Veda. On the one hand, it is the first book of India and also of mankind. At the same time, it shows the highest point of human wisdom. We see in it the whole process of evolution from its beginning to its completion".

Chapter I

JNANAYOGA—THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE

In this path, what is prayed for is ಧೀ (Intelligence, the instrument of knowledge, both material and spiritual) ಮೇಧಾ (talent), ಕೃತು (Wisdom); ದಕ್ಷಿಣ (efficiency) and qualities like these. They represent the principle of light (ಜ್ಯೋತಿ). The light of intellect is called (ವರ್ಜಸ್). The man of knowledge, in the vedas, has been called as ವಿಪ್ರ, ಕವಿ, ಮುನಿ, and by such other names.

1. Prayer for Wisdom

“ Give, give us wisdom, as a father gives to his sons,
Guide us, invoked in this path.
May we live and have light”.

(Rg. VII, 32-26)

2. Prayer for Mental Power

“ We contemplate that adorable glory of the Deity-
which is in the earth, the sky, the heaven.
May He stimulate our mental power”.

(Rg III 62-10)

This is the purport of the “Gayathri” mantra. It is a prayer for the highest power that man is capable of possessing—ಧೀ (highest intelligence) which brings him knowledge—both material and spiritual. What the eye is to the body, ಧೀ or intelligence is to the mind. The Bhagavad Gita call the man of the highest wisdom ಸ್ಥಿತಧೀ—one in whom ಧೀ or higher intelligence has been securely established.

3. Brahmacharya precedes knowledge of Brahman

“The brahmacharin born before spiritual knowledge robed in libation, stood up through spiritual endeavour (tapas). From him arose sacred wisdom (the knowledge of the highest Brahman), and all the Shining Ones with life that lasts for ever”.

(Ath. XI 5-5)

Brahmacharya is an apprenticeship in knowledge and a process of intellectual and moral development. It is a systematic course of self-discipline and education by which one qualifies for the higher spiritual life.

4. Knowledge of the Supreme is essential

“What will he do with the edic Vhymn, who does not know the Eternal Supreme region, as it were, in which the Devas dwell? But those who have known That, are perfect”

(Rg. I 164-39)

This stanza asserts the indispensability of the knowledge of the Divine, in the higher spiritual life. This is the Central point in జ్ఞానయోగ, the path of knowledge. This is also the central significance of the Vedas. According to the Vedas, it is the knowledge of God that matters and not the mere word of the Veda. The word is nothing if knowledge does not follow. So, the Veda itself says that the mere memorising of the vedic hymns is of no spiritual value.

It should also be carefully noted that the concept of God as the Eternal Being (అక్షర) formless and abodeless, a transcendental power beyond all material reality-is

focussed primarily in the Vedas and in the later philosophical literature. Thus the idea of God as the Eternal Absolute being is peculiar to the vedic religion and philosophy.

ವೇದೈಶ್ವ ಸರ್ವೈಃ ಅಹುಮೇವ ವೇದೈಃ (Bhg. : Gita 15-15)

“And that which is to be known by all the Vedas am I (i.e., supreme being)”.

That the Ultimate Reality (ಅಕ್ಷರ) is the subject of the vedic hymn (ಋಕ್) has been recognised in all ages in India.

ಯದಕ್ಷರಂ ವೇದವಿದೋವದಂತಿ (Bhg. Gita 8-11)

“That which the knowers of the Vedas speak of as the Indestructible”.

Chapter II

RAJA YOGA—THE PATH OF MYSTICISM

The knowledge of the Divine is not mere philosophy—the result of a process of thought ; it is experience. It is the mystical experience (ಪ್ರತ್ಯಕ್ಷಾನುಭೂತಿ), of the Ultimate Reality in the depth of the soul. The Bhagavad Gita describes “That” as the “Sovereign Secret” and the path to “IT” as the “Path” to the Sovereign Mystery, (ರಾಜಗುಹ್ಯಯೋಗ). It has been called, in short, (ರಾಜಯೋಗ) the Path of Mysticism.

It is the path of spiritual realisation. What is realised is a Divine Presence, both transcendental and

immanental. Logic and arithmetic lose their significance, in this realisation. The Deity is one and many; minute as well as vast; beyond the catagories of time, space, causality etc., etc., He is the spirit beyond matter, the Eternal, the Immortal; He is the One beyond all diversity; in Him all contradictions and conflicts meet and dissolve through a spiritual transformation. Goodwill, love, sweetness, poetry follow the realisation; the soul rises above the trammels of life and seeks unity with all, in the unity of the One.

By earnest determination one dedicates oneself to higher ideals, and through this ಪ್ರತಿ one enters spiritual life and achieves spiritual refinement and grace (ದಕ್ಷಿಣ). This lends to the development of the quality of reverence (ಶ್ರದ್ಧಾ) through which, one is finally led to the possession of Ultimate Truth.

1. The One Divine Existence

"The speak of Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni; and there is the divine, winged Suparna. The One Being, the wise call by many names as Agni, Yama, Matariswan, (Rg. I 164-46), Here the ultimate Reality is described as One Absolute Being.

2. The One in Many

In recognising unity in diversity, mysticism does not reject diversity. For it, the One is Many and the Many are One. It is here the mysticism pays no regard to arithmetic or logic.

"One is Agni kindled in man a spot;
One is Surya shining over all;

One is Usha illumining all this,
That which is One has become this All"

Rg. VIII 58-2

While speaking of the different visions of the Ultimate Reality, masculine, feminine and neutral genders have been used; thus it is made clear that the gender and number of the names of the Divinity are of no account; all stand for the Ultimate Being.

3. All Gods in One.

"That is, ye Poets! Your great and lovely title that All You Devas exist in Indra.

O Friend, much in Voked! Thou art with Thy dear Ribhus; frame this hymn for our welfare."

—Rg. III 54-17

Note here the mystical indifference to numbers. In another stanza of the same hymn, the One Absolute is said to be the Lord of everything.

4. God in the Ocean and in the Drop.

Here, we have the idea of divine all—pervasiveness expressed in terms of space. God is in the Vast. He is in the Little. In fact, in the mystic conception, space like number or time or causality, is of no account.

"This earth is the possession of God, the King; and the high heaven whose ends are far asunder; And both the seas are His loins; and He lies in the small drop of water."

(A. IV : 16-3)

This idea is expressed in the Kathopanishad also, in the peculiar Upanishadic style.

“ಅಣೋರಣೀಯಾನ್ ಮಹತೋ ಮಹೀಯಾನ್”

“(The Atma) is smaller than the small and greater than the great.” The Bhagawad Gita also expresses this idea of God, in the minute.

“ಅಣೋರಣೀಯಾಂಸಂ”

Bhg. Gita. 8-9

“(Minuter than the minute)”

5. God is Everywhere

The following concrete expression of the all-pervasiveness of the Divine is typically vedic :

“Whoever stands or walks or who moves in secret,
Who goes to his lying down or his uprising:
What two men sitting together, whisper to each other,
all that God, the King, knows: He is the Third
present there.”

(A IV, 16-2)

6. The Divinity in every Order of Reality.

“The Divinity is the heaven, the Divinity is the
mid-region;
The Divinity is the mother, the father, the son;
The Divinity is all Deities, the Divinity is the five-
classed men,
The Divinity is all that is born and will be born.”

Rg. I. 89-10

The Divine Power unites the universe not only in terms of space but also in terms of time, pervading the past, the present and the future.

One is Usha illumining all this,
That which is One has become this All"

Rg. VIII 58-2

While speaking of the different visions of the Ultimate Reality, masculine, feminine and neutral genders have been used; thus it is made clear that the gender and number of the names of the Divinity are of no account: all stand for the Ultimate Being.

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"This earth is the possession of God, the King; and the high heaven whose ends are far asunder; And both the seas are His loins; and He lies in the small drop of water."

(A. IV : 16-3)

7. The All-Pervading Being

The idea of the Divinity as an all-pervading Being has been expressed in grand language in the 'Purusha' hymn of the Vedas; and in this hymn, the mystical conception of the 'Many in one' finds a remarkable illustration. The Purusha hymn occurs in all the four Veda. The Divinity is immanental in the universe in terms of space, time—thus expresses His splendour.

"Purusha (Supreme Person) is thousand headed, thousand eyed, thousand footed; He pervading the earth on all sides, transcends the ten directions".

Rg. X 90-1

"Purusha is all that has been and that will be; And He is the Lord of immortality which transcends through matter."

Rg. X 90-2

"Such (that He pervades all space and time) is His splendour, but Purusha is greater than this. All beings are a quarter of Him; three quarters make the immortality in the Supreme region."

Rg. X 90-3

This stanza implies that the Divinity is not co-extensive with universe or creation. The splendour of the universe is only an aspect of Him; He has other aspects that are unmanifested and transcendental.

8. Creation, A Grand Sacrifice :

What is God's creation? In what relation does He stand to it? It is not like the making of a pot by the potter. It is a spiritual act—a sacrifice, through which the

absolute (अक्षर) reveals His splendour. The idea of sacrifice has been poetically worked out in the Veda. "Of the Yagna (sacrifice) that the shining ones prepared with Purusha as the oblation, Spring was the ghee, summer the wood and autumn the offering."

Rg. X 90-6

Here it is said that creation proceeds from sacrifice. Elsewhere, in the Rg Veda it is said creation proceeds from Tapas (spiritual fire). "Eternal order and Truth were born of blazing spiritual fire."

Rg. X 190-1

Thus Yagna (sacrifice) as the means of creation indicates the spiritual nature of the latter. Creation is not mechanical construction, it is supreme spiritual act revealing the Divine mystic splendour.

9. The Final Mystery

The Veda leaves the final question on ultimate things unanswered. "Who really knows, and who can here declare it—whence was it born, and whence came this creation? And did the Devas appear with its production? But, than who knows whence it has arisen?"

Rg. X 129-16

This query leads to the final mystery of the Universe

10. Who knows?

"He from whom this creation comes into being,
Whether He upheld it or did not
He Who oversees it in the eternal region,
He really knows it, or perhaps He doesn't know."

Rg. X 129-7

The Veda recognises the Supreme Being surveying all—but leaves unanswered the question of whence—from what material this creation came into being. The sage has an experience which cannot be interpreted in terms of the senses and mind as they are of limited nature. The mystic experience cannot be reduced to word or thought. The question of whence has to be answered by the Creator, Ultimate Reality-Himself—as the Infinite cannot be measured and calculated.

The Vedic sage has an experience which cannot be interpreted in terms of the senses, before which the mind is restless, unable to comprehend. He cannot reduce his experience to word or thought. What is given in the Veda, as a deep personal experience with subtle emotion is found in the Upanishad as an aphorism:—

“ಯತೋ ವಾಚೋ ನಿವರ್ತಂತೇ ಅಪ್ರಾಪ್ಯ ಮನಸಾ ಸಹ”

“From which words return unattaining, with the mind.” This is intellectual and philosophic; but the Vedic line is poetical and personal.

“ಕಿಂ ಸ್ವಿದ್ ವಕ್ಷ್ಯಾಮಿ ಕಿಂ ಊನಾ ಮನಿಷ್ಯೇ”

Rg. VI 9-6

“What shall I speak? What really, shall I think?” Here we are brought into contact with an intense spiritual mood—the mental embarrassment before the final Mystery of the universe.

(II) The Atman

“Desireless, firm, immortal, Self-existent, contented with the essence, lacking nothing, is He. One fears not

death who has known Him, the Soul (Atman)—serene, ageless, youthful ! ”

(Ar. X 8-44)

Here, we find the concept of the Divine, as the indwelling spirit (Atman) ever steady, ever young, undecaying. This concept is very common in Upanishads. The Veda says that the individual soul lives with the Atman, in the mortal body having limitations imposed by the three gunas (Satwa-light, Rajas-force and Thamas-darkness) and that these are transcended with the blossoming of the lotus that is in the body. (The fully blossomed lotus has been recognised in India—as a symbol of spiritual enlightenment).



Chapter III

VIBHOOTHI YOGA — THE PATH OF SPLENDOUR

Here the sage perceives the Divine presence in all that is splendid and beautiful in the universe. The path of mysticism is the path of the sage as a recluse; the path of splendour is the path of the sage as a poet : The poet sage expresses his exquisite astonishment before the vision of glory and wonder — like Arjuna, before the “*Viswarupa*”. The poetic spiritual attitude is described as the Path of splendour : It has a speciality—that it never loses touch with the material reality realised by sense-perception, though it seeks a transcendental beyond the reach of senses.

The source of all splendour is light, hence light is the central object of admiration for the poet-sage. Light (ಜ್ಯೋತಿ) is also symbol of all splendour and glory of spirit. It stands for truth (ಸತ್ಯ) order (ಏಕತ) reality (ಸತ್) goodness (ಸ್ವಸ್ತಿ) glory (ಶ್ರೀ) beauty (ಸೌಂದರ್ಯ) intelligence (ಧೀ) Wisdom (ಕ್ರತು) bliss (ಭದ್ರ) immortality (ಅಮೃತ) Divinity (ದೇವತ) and nobility (ಆರ್ಯತಾ). Whereas the opposite of light—darkness (ತಮಸ್) stands for untruth (ಅಸತ್ಯ) disorder, falsehood (ಅನ್ಯತ) unreality (ಅಸತ್) ugliness (ಅಶ್ರೀ) ignorance (ಅವಿದ್ಯಾ) death (ಮೃತ್ಯು) Demon (ಅಸುರತ) and the wicked (ದಸ್ಯು). Light is associated with fire (ಅಗ್ನಿ), sun (ಸೂರ್ಯ) the dawn (ಉಷಾ) etc. Surya is the inner principle of light and life - "The Atma within what moves and what stands still" -
 || ಸೂರ್ಯ ಆತ್ಮಾ ಜಗತಸ್ತ ಸ್ಥುಷ್ಠಃ ||

1. The Lord of Light

"Him who shines crest by crest equally on all,
 Surya, the Lord of what moves and what is still,
 The seven bays bear in the Car for the world's well being.
 That lustrous Eye, God ordained, arising,
 May we see a hundred autumns. May we
 live a hundred autumns." (Rg. VII-65-15-16)

The union of light and life sums up, in the physical and spiritual sense, the Vedic outlook, on the world.

2. Source of Truth

"We, with our hymns glorify today Savita,
 All - Gods-in-One, the protector of the good
 Whose decrees stand for truth.

(Rg. V. 82-7)

‘ಸತ್ಯದೇವ’ - All-Gods-in-One is an interesting vedic expression. As the Veda ignores the difference of number, it addresses “All-Gods” - (ಸತ್ಯದೇವಾಃ), in the same way as it addresses one God as ‘All-Gods-in-One’ (ಸತ್ಯದೇವ). This implies that though the Veda speaks of many Gods, it does not recognise the real numerical significance of ‘many’. God is one—but is contemplated in many ways. This is a mystical conception, peculiar to Veda.

3 The All Prevading Being

“He is the Swan seated in the midst of light ;
The Lord of wealth seated in the mid-region
the Priest seated by the altar, the Guest seated in the house.

The Dweller among men, the Dweller in the noblest place,

The Dweller in the Eternal Law, the Dweller in the infinite sky ;

born of water, born of light, born of Eternal Law, born of the mountain, He is the Eternal Law.”

(Rg. IV 40-5)

The Deity in this verse is Surya (ಸೂರ್ಯ). The beginning of the verse may suggest a material phenomenon, the sun surrounded by bright light. But soon it becomes apparent that the swan (ಸಂಕ) is a symbolic term, signifying the Ultimate Being. The idea expressed is that of the supremacy and all-pervasiveness of the Divinity. Finally the idea goes from the concrete to the abstract. He is in the Eternal Law : He is the

Eternal Law itself. This association of the concrete and abstract, the material and the spiritual, is typical of the vedic poetry and belongs to the religious outlook described as (विभूतयोरग) — 'The Path of Splendour'.

4. The Bright One

"Indra ! if a hundred heavens were Thine,
And even a hundred earths, -
No, not even a thousand Suns, O Thunderer,
Could match Thee, manifested, nor both the worlds".

(Rg. VIII. 70-5)

(The Deity is Indra)

Here Divine glory is described : We find a comparison in Bhagavad Gita :— (11-12).

"If there could be the splendour of a thousand suns arisen at once in the sky, such would be the glory of that Magnificent Being.

5. The Supreme Being

In the following verse, the opening Mantra of the Rg. Veda, the Deity is called the supreme Donor ;
"I pray to Agni, the priest, God of the Sacrifice, the Minister of the Ritual. The offerer of Oblations, the the best giver of treasure."

(Rg. I 1-1)

Superlative terms applied to the Deity, indicating the state of every value of life, are found scattered over the Vedas. It is important to note that the deities are

named differently - Agni, Indra etc., but each possesses the supreme quality : in other words, each deity represents the Supreme Being, in a particular way. The Vedic mode of describing the Supreme Being in superlative, is indicative of His Lordship, in all aspects, over the whole Universe. Herein lies the secret of Vibhuti-Yoga. The Vedic sage views the beauty of Nature in two ways : one material, where the Universe shines in splendour ; the other, spiritual, where he realises the presence of the Supreme Being beyond the splendour.



Chapter IV

BHAKTI YOGA—THE PATH OF DEVOTION

The simplest attitude in religion is that of love and devotion (ಭಕ್ತಿಯೋಗ). Here, the Divinity is contemplated as the Lord, and in most affectionate terms - by means of meditation, prayer and worship : The worshipper seeks Divine bliss (ಸ್ವಸ್ತಿ). He prays for Divine grace (ಊತಿ), benediction (ಶರ್ಮಾ), protection (ಶರ್ಮನ್), help (ಅವಸ್), mercy (ಮೃಣಾ), love (ಸುಮತಿ), etc., God is the saviour (ತಾತಾ), the Merciful one (ಮರ್ದಿತಾ), Protector (ಅವಿತಾ), and so on. He is the Most Beloved one (ಜುಷ್ಠ, ಪ್ರೇಷ್ಠ) : According to this ideology, the Divinity is common to all men (ಸಮಾನ) and Universal (ಸಾರ್ವಜನ). The spirit of true love and devotion (ಭಕ್ತಿ) arouses the finest of vedic poetry, and prayer often becomes a song.

1. The Supreme Being - Source of Power

“Who is the deity we shall adore with our oblation ?

The Divine Being who existed in the beginning,
 Who was the manifest as the One Lord of Creation,
 and who upheld this earth and this sky.
 He who bestows soul-force and vigour,
 Whose law the whole world obeys, the Cosmic
 powers obey,
 Where shadow is immortality and death."

(Rg. X 121-1-2)

The term used here for the Divine Being is "Hiranyagarbha". God is the Creator and the Ultimate Being. He is the Lord of all existence—the supporter of the Universe. He is the source of all strength, spiritual as well as physical —

In Him, man has his ultimate refuge ;

2. Song of Praise

"Sing, Sing forth your songs, O Priyamedhases, sing!
 Let children also sing !
 Sing of Him (Who is a Refuge) like the strong castle!
 Now loudly let the gargara (violin) sound,
 Let the gadha (lute) send its resounding voice,
 Let the string send its tunes around,
 To God is our hymn appraised".

(Rg. VIII 69, 8-9)

Throughout the ages, the sky of India has rung with the songs of love and devotion. This is the typical mode of worship - according to the path of devotion, (ಭಕ್ತಿ ಮಾರ್ಗ). Here, the prayer is the musical outpouring from

the love-filled heart of man or woman. This simple and direct prayer comes from the child as well as from the adult: In fact, some love-filled musical songs have great magical and psychological effects on living beings and even on nature.

3. God is Pure and Holy

"Come now, and let us pray to the Deity who is pure, with pure song - Him who is glorified by pure eulogies; May the pure, blissful One be pleased".

(Rg. NII 95-7)

"The Deity is supreme among those who live the holy life.

He is the holy Sage, the holy Poet,
He, who is being called by us in prayer, is
resplendent in holiness".

(Rg. VIII 44-21)

Purity is Godliness. Man should, therefore, be pure in body and mind in offering his prayers to God: The Vedas, in addition to recognising truth, goodness, and beauty as the values of life, also recognise the spiritual value - holiness.

4. The Divinity in Man

"Oh! Bounteous Ones, we surely establish now our brotherhood, with equality in the mother's womb".

(Rg. VIII 83-8)

To be born man is to partake of the divine nature:

Man establishes his kinship with the Divine, in the mother's womb :

This sense of essential divinity of man is a special feature of the Vedic religious and spiritual idealism.

"May all sons of immortality listen - all the possessors of the celestial natures : "

(Rg. X-31.1)

It is from this point of view that religion has been described as "the manifestation of the divinity that is already in man" - Man approaches God through what is divine in himself.

(Swami Vivekananda)

So, the conception of the joy of the stainless soul seeking the pure joy of the Divine is typically vedic.

5. God - the Saviour

"God the Rescuer, God the Saviour, mighty God, happily invoked at each invocation,

God, powerful, invoked of many, I invoke.

May God, the bounteous, confer on us blessing".

(Rg. VI 47-11)

This hymn occurs in all the four Vedas - being put into the musical form, in the Sama Veda, The idea is typical of the attitude of devotion (भक्ति) through which man seeks Divine assistance and grace, to help him out of his sorrows and imperfections. According to the *Bhakti* ideal the sincere devotion of the heart is enough

for prayer and worship ; the details of the ritual are secondary.

It may be noted that according to the Vedas, God Himself is the Saviour and Helper. As in the desert the thirsty man is saved by a fountain of water, found in an oasis, so in the world man is saved by Divine grace.

6. God the Support of the Humble

“Vishnu overstrode this earth, ready to give it for a home to man. The humble people find themselves secure under His protection. This noble One has made the earth spacious for them”.

(Rg. VII 100-4)

The worship of Vishnu took a sectarian form in the Vaishnavite cult. But the ideology of Vaishnavism is found in the Vedas. According to this, the chief thing in religion is Divine grace which is most needed by the humble and distressed, The devotee constantly realises that all he has and all that he enjoys, are from God who in His infinite kindness has endowed him with these. This is also the ideology of mass religion.

7. God, the Friend and the Guest

“Never may this friendship be severed
Of Thee, O Deity, and of the sage Vimada.
We know, O God ! Thy brother-like love ;
With us be Thy benign friendship.”

(Rg. X 23-7)

"I laud the Deity, your dearest Guest,
Beloved as a friend: to be approached for help
like a chariot."

(Rg. VIII 14-1)

The key note of this type of prayer is the contemplation of friendly love between the Deity and the worshipper. He is described as "the dearest Guest", "House-Friend" and "beloved Guest".

One gives to the guest and does not expect to receive anything from him. Hence, the worship of God, as a Friend and Guest, is that of pure motiveless love (ಸದ್ಭಕ್ತಿ) without expectation of any return.



Chapter V

KARMA YOGA—THE PATH OF ACTION

The path of action (ಕರ್ಮಯೋಗ) is as important, according to the Vedas, as the path of knowledge (ಜ್ಞಾನಯೋಗ). In later religious literature, we find a tendency to consider action useless, or at best a necessary evil; but in the Vedas, action is accepted as an essential part of life.

Karma-yoga means, primarily, the acceptance of our existence on the material plane. This leads to the building up of the body and the sharpening of the mind and of living a full life, with health and vigour and in the joy of being. It does not apply to mere biological existence.

it applies also to moral and spiritual life. Hence the battle of life is the battle between good and evil.

The prayer of the Karma-yogin is, therefore, a prayer for long-life, health and strength, for a perfect body and a sound mind; it is also a prayer for valour and power, and for victory over all kinds of evil, based on the kshatriya spirit. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of".

(Lord Tennyson)

1. Prayer for Long and Healthy Life

"Give sight to our eyes,
Sight to our bodies so that they can see.
May we see the world as a whole,
May we see it in detail.
May Vayu blow His balm on us
Vayu who brings well-being and health
to our hearts: May He lengthen our lives".

(Rg. X 186-1)

Here, not only the physical but also mental sight is prayed for judging things both synthetically and analytically. Vayu (literally, Air) is a symbolic name of God who is the giver of life and health. Non-figuratively, fresh air gives us health and long life.

2. Prayer for Full and Happy Life

"May we, for a hundred autumns, see that lustrous Eye (of the sky i.e. Sun), God ordained, arise: May we live for a hundred autumns".

(Rg. VII. 66-16)

“O God! bestow on us the best treasures;
the efficient mind, and spiritual lustre.
The increase of wealth, the health of bodies,
the sweetness of speech and the fairness of days”.

(Rg. II-21.6)

This is an expression of the will to live—a long radiant life of hundred years. Our days should not be just days, but fair, bright and happy days:

3. Protection Against Old Age and Death

“Break not, O God! our ancestral friendship
being One with deep knowledge and a Sage.
Like the cloud (over spreading), old age impairs
the form;

before that evil comes near, protect me”.

(Rg. I. 71-10)

One should not only have long life but also prolonged youth and vigour; and meet the death as a comrade and drop in the end, like a ripe fruit from the stem.

4. God the Valiant

Vedic morals are found not only in exhortations and prayers but also in the conception of Devas, perfect beings, whose qualities indicate ideal virtues. In the following verse, God (Indra) is contemplated as strong and valiant.

“O God! Thy manifestation rests on strength, valour and energy.

Thou, Mighty one! art strong, indeed”.

(Rg. X. 153-2)

Here strength (ಬಲ) conquering power (ಪ್ರಸಕ್ತಿ) and energy (ಒಜಸ್) are the qualities admired.

5. Prayer for Divine Virtues

“Thou art fiery spirit, give me that ;
 Thou art manly vigour, give me that ;
 Thou art power, give me that ;
 Thou art energy, give me that ;
 Thou art battle cry, give me that ;
 Thou art conquering might, give me that ”.

(Y. XIX-9)

Man wishes to be God-like by developing the divine qualities in him ; he wants to live fearlessly, in the friendship of the Never-Conquered Conqueror—which is typically the vedic ideal.

6. Wealth through Path of Law and Honest Labour

“Do not play with dice ; cultivate thy corn-field ;
 Delight in that wealth, thinking highly of it ;
 O Gambler, there is thy cattle and there thy wife ;
 So the noble Savita has told me ”.

(Rg. X. 34-13)

“Let a man think well on wealth and try to win
 it by Law ;
 Let him take counsel with his own inner wisdom and
 grasp
 With spirit still greater ability ”.

(Rg. X. 31-2)

A man should obtain wealth by honest and rightful means and not by gambling ; He is called upon to work in his field and run the house-hold along with his wife under the guidance of Dharma, and become progressively

efficient by taking thought within himself.

7. Unselfishness

“The unwise man obtains grains to little purpose ;
I tell you the truth – it is as good as death :
He feeds neither a friend, comrade or guest.
And one who eats all by himself, sins all by himself :”

(Rg. X. 117.6)

The last line literally means “The lonely eater is the lonely sinner”. Life must be lived on altruistic principles. We have similar sentence in Sri Bhagavad-Gita : “ಭುಂಜತೇ ತೇ ತ್ವಘೃಂ ಪಾಪಾ ಯೇ ಪಜಂತ್ಯಾತ್ಮಕಾರಣಾತ್” i. e. Those evil people partake of sin who only cook for themselves.

8. Rise through Good Life

“Bar me, O Agni ! against evil conduct,
make me resort to good conduct ;
I have risen with life, have risen with good life
following the Immortals”.

(Rg. I. 89-8 ; Yr. II-28)

Goodness is divine ; to follow the Divinity is also to tread the path of goodness : It is not enough we should live long, but should also live a good life, with all good-will in the mind. The Veda goes to the spring of all action – the mind of man – and desires goodness there. If the will that proceeds from the depths of our being be good, then our whole conduct is good.

“ಆನೋ ಭದ್ರಾಃ ಕ್ರತವೋ ಯಂತು ವಿಶ್ವತಃ”

(Rg. I-89-1)

“Let noble thoughts come to us from every side”

9. Marriage

Domestic life occupies a central place in life according to the Vedas. It is established on love and marriage, the conjugal bond and the family ties. Note the vedic way of taking a wife; the bride-groom approaches the father of the lady for his consent: a point that establishes the dignified position of the woman.

“I take thy hand (in mine) for good fortune,
that thou mayest live to old-age with me, thy husband;
Gods Bhaga, Aryama, Savita, Purandhi, have given
thee to me to be the mistress and queen of my home”.

(Rg. X 15-36)

This marriage vow has united couples in India for thousands of years. “Being mistress of a home” (ಗಾರ್ಹಪತ್ಯ) came to imply the living of the ideal domestic life (ಗೃಹಸ್ಥ ಶ್ರಮ).

10. A Life - Long Union

“May you two dwell here; be not parted;
enjoy the full span of life,
Playing with sons and with grandsons,
rejoicing in your own home”.

(Rg. X 85-42)

The vedic ideal of marriage is that of perfect monogamy, the life long companionship of the couple. This practice must have been well-established, as is evident from the fact that the Vedic Rishi, seeking comparisons for perfect duality for the twin Deities, Aswins, gives

along with the examples of two eyes, two lips, two ears etc., that of a married couple.

“ದಂಪತೀವ ಕೃತುವಿದಾ ಜನೇಷು”

(Rg. II 39.2)

“Like a wise married couple among the people”

11. Chastity is Godly

The Rg-Veda gives love and matrimony the most exalted status when it compares the Divinity in respect of purity to the chaste and beloved wife. “ಅನವದಾ ಪತಿಜುಷ್ಠೇವ ಸಾರೀ” “Like the spotless wife loved by her husband”

(Rg. I 73-3)

This also implies that chastity in the woman is a godly quality.

12. Widow Remarriage

In Rig-Veda (Rg. X. 18-8.9) it is declared that the widowed wife could be comforted by a man who calls her back to the world and its tasks. A woman so comforted need not spend an unhappy life of widowhood. It is possible that she could choose to enter into another marriage bond, and fight the battle of life with her new husband. There is clear reference to the remarriage of a woman, in the Atharva Veda also.

“The woman who, having had former husband, thereafter gets another later on,
She and her new husband - these two, if they give five

rich-dishes and a goat, will not be separated”.

(A. IX. 5-27)

This means that a woman having lost her husband, married again.

13. Beauty of a Sweet and Happy Home

The Veda considers the home as a sort of heaven on earth :

“They adorn the swift steed for the liberal giver,
for the liberal giver the resplendent bride awaits.
His is the home like the lotus-like, decorated,
and wonderful as the divine mansion”.

(Rg. X. 109-10)

The promises for the bountiful donor indicate the importance of the home and the care with which it is beautified. A healthy home presided over by a thrifty, cleanly woman may be the abode of comfort of virtue and happiness. Such a home is regarded as a training place for the young children, a sanctuary for the heart, a refuge from storms, a sweet resting place after labour, a consolation in sorrow and joy at all times.

14. Four Limbs of Society

If human society is imagined to be a mighty Person (ಪುರುಷ) then His important limbs should represent the important orders of Society.

“The man of knowledge (Brahman) was his mouth,
his arms were the ruling man (Rajanya);
His thighs were that which is the man of trade (Vaisya),
out of his feet was born the working man (Sudra)”.

(Rg. X 90-12)

Society should consist of men following four broad types of pursuits—learning and culture, politics, trade and labour. It is to be noted that the Vedas recognise the 'dignity of labour' by making the labour an essential part of Purusha, the Divine person, and not castes or creeds.

15. The Supreme Sacrifice

"He chose death, for the sake of Gods; and for men's sake, he chose not immortality. They made a sacrifice of Brihaspati, the sage. Yama gave up his own dear body".

(Rg. X 12-8)

The sacrifice (Yajna) referred to here is the sacrifice of life for God's sake and men's sake. The sage Brihaspati or Yama died to find a path for mortal men from this world to another. (Hence, the Rishi, Yama has been called the "Path-finder"—(पथकर्त्ता)).

(Rg. X 14-15)

The knowledge that man being mortal, death should be accepted and welcomed, marked a great spiritual advance for the vedic people.

The highest sacrifice is self-sacrifice for a noble cause. It is said of Purusha, the Creator, that He created the Universe by making a sacrifice of Himself (Rg. X 90-6) as the Absolute Being - in order to be manifested on the relative plane of existence.

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(ಕರ್ಮ) does not drag the spirit to a lower level of existence. Thus, there is equal insistence on Jnana Yoga and Karma Yoga.

The Bhagawad Gita paraphrases the last portion of the extract, by saying: ("ಕುರ್ವನ್ಮಹಿ ನ ಲಿಪ್ಯತೇ".) (V. 7) "Acting, he is not besmudged".

Hence, by the study of the above few Rg, Vedic hymns, selected and grouped under different spiritual attitudes, it is seen that the soul-stirring hymns are meant not only for prayers in performing the sacrifices but also for attaining the true knowledge of the Supreme Being. Later on, this knowledge, hidden in the hymns was marvellously expounded by the Vedic seers to the deserving disciples who thirsted for it—in the form of Upanishads. And it is found that the gold of the Upanishads is verily drawn from the rich-mines of the Rg-Vedic samhitas which are of supreme importance to all students of philosophy, leading to Theism.

Message of the Vedic Sages

"Live in the world fully, joyfully and energetically;
Love the world in its correct perspective;
And conquer the world with renunciation,
deep devotion and true knowledge of the One Supreme Being."

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Abbreviations

1. Rg : VII (32-26)—Rigveda, Mandala 7, Sukta 32, Mantra No. 26.
2. Y : XIX-(9)—Yajurveda - Chapter 19, Mantra 9.
3. Ar. : IV (16-2)—Atharva Veda, Kanda 4, Sukta 16 Manthra 2.
4. Bhg : Gita (11-12)—Bhagavad Gita - Adhyaya 11, Sloka 12.

Errata

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Read</i>
2	17	the Vedas	the other Vedas
	22	from	form
3	9	&	and
6	17	obroad	abroad
7	1	behaviour	of behaviour
9	12	edic Vhymn	Vedic hymn
10	3	being	Being
	5	ಅಹಮೇವ	ಅಹಮೇವ
	7	supreme being	Supreme Being
	17	ಪ್ರಶ್ನಾ ಕ್ಷೇಮಭೂತಿ	ಪ್ರಶ್ನಾ ಕ್ಷೇಮಭೂತಿ
11	9	ann	and
	13	life	life
	18	the	they
12	12	in Voked !	invoked !
14	7	Veda	Vedas
15	21	than	then
16	8	Uttimate	Ultimate
33	10	lotus-like	lotus-lake

